Environmental Sociology

Sociology 465
Fall 2019
M/W 4:40-6:30
Cramer Hall 269
Julius McGee
Office: Cramer 217O (office hours MW 1:00PM – 2:00PM)
TA: Sarah Guldenbrein (gulden2@pdx.edu)

Course Description:

In this course, you will learn about environmental sociology – the study of interactions between humans and the environment. This involves interactions with various sub-disciplines in sociology such as critical race theory, gender, and political economy. Abstractly, we will be exploring how human societies affect the environment, and, in turn, how human societies are shaped by the ecological conditions. Topics covered in this course include climate change and climate denial, sustainability, food justice, environmental racism (with a focus on the flint water crisis), and ecofeminism.

Course expectations:

Workload: As a general rule, in any 4-credit course, students are expected to spend 4 hours per week in the classroom and 8-12 additional hours per week doing coursework outside the classroom.

The time commitment may vary from week to week, depending on the amount of reading and other assigned work. Some weeks may require significantly fewer hours, some may require more. Course materials include many reminders regarding the work you must complete.

Active Participation: You must log on to the D2L course at least every three days to check for announcements and email.

• All coursework must be submitted in the D2L course (except in class writing responses).
• If you encounter problems with D2L, click on D2L Help at the top of the page. It’s a very good idea to print a copy of the contact info found there in case you are unable to access D2L at some point during the term.
• Problems with your computer are NOT an acceptable reason for deadline extensions. If you encounter computer problems that cannot be resolved in time, you should use another computer to complete the work prior to the deadlines. It’s a good idea to have an alternative computer identified BEFORE you run into problems.

Course Policies:

D2L: The instructor will post the syllabus on D2L. Students will submit journal entries via D2L. The instructor will also post comments on response papers and grades for all assignments on D2L.

Email: The instructor regularly communicates with the class via PSU email so be sure that you are receiving my emails. It is your responsibility to check your email daily during the school week and respond in a timely manner. In emails to the instructor, please put the title of the course in the subject line and sign your emails using your first and last name. Use the email addresses on the first page of the syllabus. The instructor will generally respond to email within 24 hours. Emails sent after 5:00pm on Friday will generally be answered by 5:00pm on Monday.

Academic honesty: You are expected to demonstrate complete academic honesty. Please refer to the Student Conduct Code for more detailed information on PSU policies. Cheating or plagiarism will result in failing the assignment and will be reported.

Plagiarism: If you use a direct quote (i.e. someone else’s words), you must include it in quotation marks and cite the source, including author(s) name(s), the date of publication, and the page number. If you summarize or paraphrase an idea from another person, you must cite the source, including author(s) name(s) and the date of publication. Failure to cite your sources, whether intentional or not, is plagiarism. Instances of plagiarism will result in failing the assignment and will be reported.

Cancelled classes: In the case of inclement weather or other emergencies, please refer to the PSU web page: http://www.pdx.edu/. In the event that the instructor has to cancel class, they will email the class as soon as possible. If the instructor has not arrived to class 10 minutes after the scheduled start time, consider class cancelled for the day.

Access and inclusion for students with disabilities: If any aspects of instruction or course design result in barriers to your inclusion or learning, please notify me. The Disability Resource Center (DRC) provides reasonable accommodations for students who encounter barriers in the learning environment. If you have, or think you may have, a disability that may affect your work in this class and feel you need accommodations, contact the DRC to schedule an appointment and initiate a conversation about reasonable accommodations. The DRC is located in 116 Smith Memorial Student Union, 503-725-4150, drc@pdx.edu, http://www.pdx.edu/drc. If you already have accommodations, please contact me to make sure that I have received a faculty notification letter and to discuss your accommodations.

Title IX reporting: As a member of the university community, I have the responsibility to report any instances of sexual harassment, sexual violence and/or other forms of prohibited discrimination. If you would rather share information about sexual harassment, sexual violence or discrimination to a confidential employee who does not have this reporting responsibility, you can find a list of those individuals at http://www.pdx.edu/sexual-assault/get-help or you may call a confidential IPV Advocate at 503-725-5672.
Graded Assignments:

**Mid-term exams (40%):** You will be evaluated on two take-home mid-term exams. For each exam you will be responsible for all the course readings given up to the exam date. You will be given five questions and are required to respond to three. Each question must be answered in no less than 500 words (about one page typed single space 12-point font). Exams will be given on Wednesday and will be due on D2L Monday before class. Thus, you will have 4 full days to complete exams. (More details will be given the day the exam is handed out.)

**Weekly writing responses (20%):** Each week you will be given a writing assignment in class that will be handed in during class time. The writing assignments will ask you to engage with specific content from the readings. These questions are not intended to be challenging. You will be graded based on your ability to respond to all aspects of the question, which includes a portion of the question that assesses whether or not you have been keeping up with the readings. Your two lowest scores will be dropped, which includes assignments missed due to absences. The logic of this policy is to give some students leeway during the course. Thus, if you are absent for up to two weeks in the course, it will not affect your grade. **You are not allowed to make up missed quizzes.** Regardless of the excuse, I do not allow students to make up writing assignments due to absences.

**Project Paper (40%):** The individual project for this class involves you making some change in your lifestyle that reduces your impact on the natural environment or serves to bring about environmentally positive social change. This is intended to be a challenging and educational project whereby you can experience the social structural and cultural factors that constrain widespread social change along ecologically sensitive lines. You will select what type of change in your lifestyle you would like to make. Some examples of changes include becoming a vegetarian or vegan, giving up driving a car, purchasing only locally produced products, and not using electricity. You may also choose to engage in some form of environmental activism. The length of time you will need to continue with this behavior depends on the difficulty entailed. I expect that 10 days will typically be a sufficient amount of time for most types of lifestyle changes, although some may be much shorter (for example, giving up electricity for one or two days would probably be sufficient). The key point is that the behavior must be a change – i.e., not something you do already. The project does not require that you are successful at making the change, only that you make a sincere attempt at it. The final paper should be no less than 1500 words and explain (1) the details of the lifestyle modification you made, (2) the environmental significance of the lifestyle modification (including citation of appropriate sources to back up your claims), and (3) what you learned from the experience. You will be graded on how creative you are in developing and implementing your project and how well you research and write your paper. I will provide more details on this project in class and you should speak to me (or send me an email) to seek clarification if you are uncertain how to proceed or just want to discuss any options you are considering.
Course Schedule and Readings

**Week 1: Introduction to Environmental Sociology**


**Week 2: Environmental Sociology: Foundations, History, and Overview**


**Week 3: Treadmill of Production/Ecological Marxism and Ecological Modernization Theory**


**Week 4: Ecological Paradoxes**


**Week 5: Environmental Racism (EXAM HANDED OUT WEDNESDAY)**


Week 6: Ecofeminism


Week 7: Environmental Disasters

 Intercepted Podcast: “HURRICANE COLONIALISM: THE ECONOMIC, POLITICAL, AND ENVIRONMENTAL WAR ON PUERTO RICO”

Listen to entire podcast using the following link.

Week 8: Public Perception, and Denialism


Week 9: Social Sustainability


Week 10: Mass Incarceration and Environmental Harm (Final Paper due Monday) (EXAM HANDED OUT WEDNESDAY)